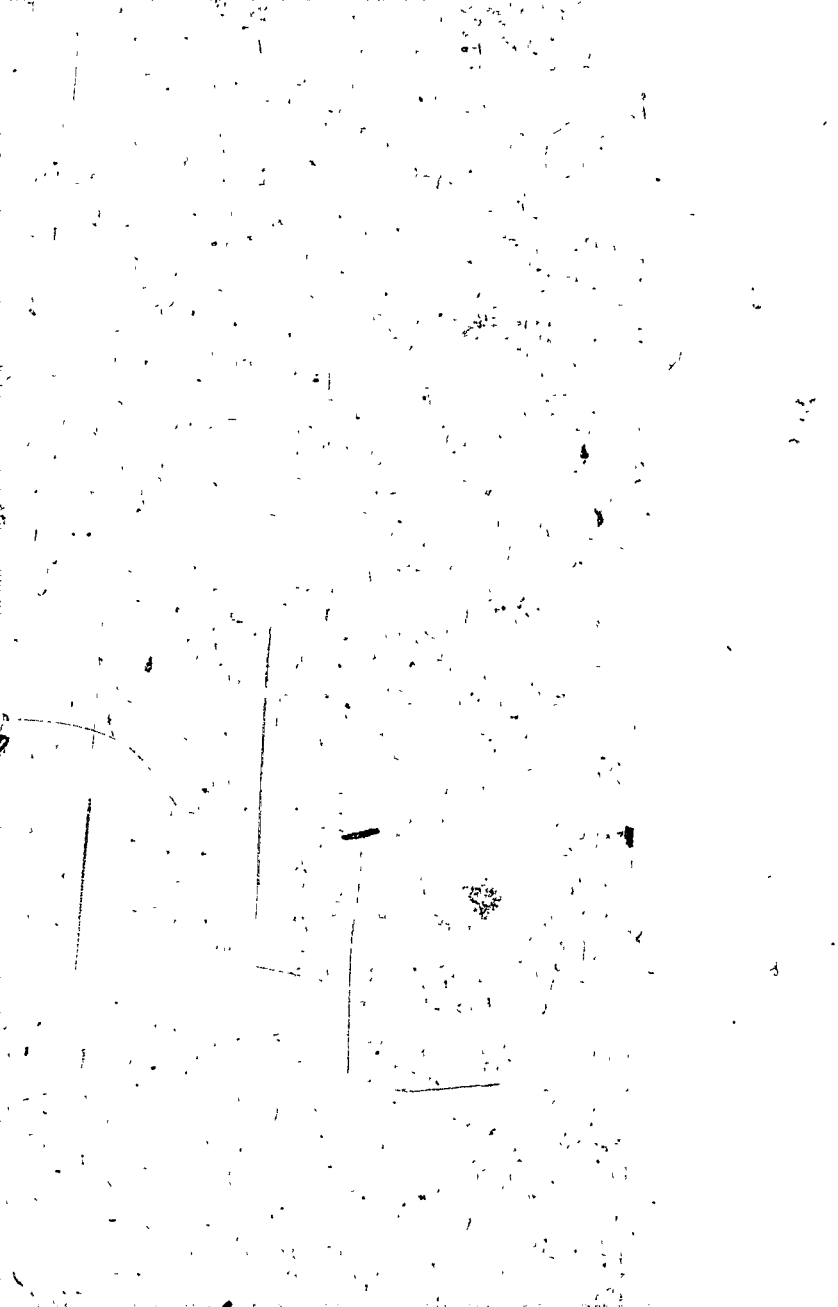


BEAVER LODGE.

Esmund, Henry

F1074.5

B4E7



Beaver Lodge

HENRY ESMUND



MISSIONARY REFERENCE LIBRARY

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

WESLEY BUILDINGS

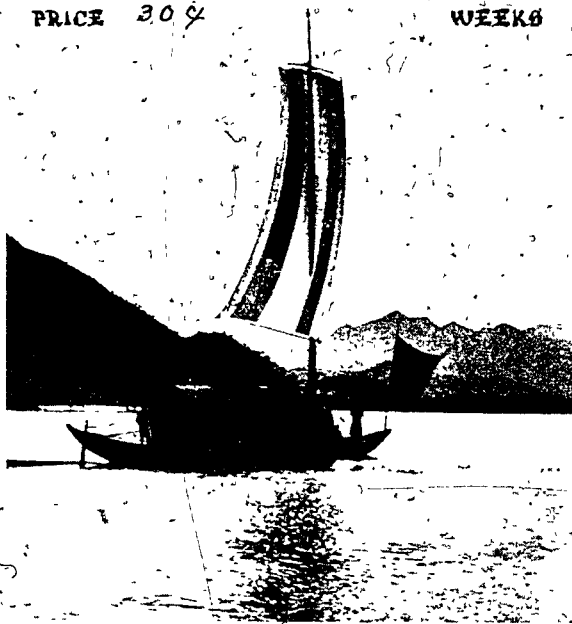
TORONTO

CODE Ca: B-E

LOAN LIMIT

PRICE 30¢

WEEKS



BEAVER LODGE

A STORY
OF A FRONTIER SETTLEMENT
IN NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN.

By
HENRY ESMUND



THE BOARD OF HOME MISSIONS
THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA,
Order from
F. C. STEPHENSON
299 Queen St. W. Toronto, Ont.

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
LIBRARY
Victoria, B. C.

COPYRIGHT, CANADA, 1930
THE BOARD OF HOME MISSIONS
THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

PRINTED AND BOUND BY THE RYERSON PRESS,
TORONTO, CANADA.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE EARLY FROST.....	7
II. THE NEW SCHOOL.....	10
III. LABOUR DAY	14
IV. WINTER	18
V. THE APOLOGY	23
VI. THE MOTHER OF THE PRODIGAL.....	27
VII. THE HOME-MAKERS	31
VIII. PRESBYTERY MEETING	38
IX. FOUND	42
X. HEART'S EASE	45
XI. SOCIAL INFLUENCES	52
XII. NEWCOMERS	59
XIII. BUT WHAT TO THOSE WHO FIND?. AH, THIS!	64
XIV. UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN	69
XV. MOVES THE CHURCH OF GOD.....	73

INTRODUCTION

The Board of Home Missions is always looking for the best and most effective kind of publicity material. In the past, through the Annual Report, articles in the press, study books, pamphlets and public addresses, the Church has been kept informed regarding our vast and varied Canadian fields. More recently, the victrola, the radio and moving pictures have been employed with very encouraging results; but very seldom has fiction or romance been used to tell the story of what the Church is trying to do to help build the new Canada of to-morrow.

When we read the manuscript of "Beaver Lodge" for the first time, we realized as never before how fascinatingly interesting a story could be written about the early days of almost every pioneer settlement in the newer parts of our Dominion. The author (who desires, for the time being at least, to remain anonymous) has given the whole of his ministerial life to Saskatchewan and knows that Province as very few other men do. For a quarter of a century he has been in intimate touch with the Home Mission work; he has seen settlement after settlement begin, develop and become populous and prosperous; he has heard from the lips of homesteaders and missionaries the story of their struggles and triumphs. Here he has taken these stories and woven them into a narrative which gives a true and vivid picture of what the Christian Church

can do to bring help and comfort to our fellow citizens who are laying the foundations of our national life in the lonely and isolated districts of our new North.

I have no doubt that some of the readers of the story may think that Henry Esmond might well have left out the darker side of the life he depicts. Perhaps some will even suggest that a little editing might have improved the story as Home Mission publicity; but, in view of the fact that it seemed to us to be such a true picture of the life of the pioneer settler, we thought that the author's work should be published just as it came to us.

I believe that this little story, "Beaver Lodge," will bring many in the older parts of Canada to understand as never before something of the task of the Home Mission Board and to appreciate more fully the joys and the sorrows of those on the fringe of civilization. I hope that we may be able to find some one before long who will be able to give us as interesting a tale of the Church's activities in the other Provinces of the Dominion.

R. B. COCHRANE.

Board of Home Missions,
The United Church of Canada.
July 24th, 1930.

BEAVER LODGE

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY FROST

"It has dropped to forty, Mother," said John McKellar, coming in from the porch, and holding the blackened kerosene lamp unsteadily in his hand. "The Traxler boys have lit their stack. Little good it'll do them. You can't heat a quarter-section by burning last year's straw."

His wife had patiently borne the constant snatching up of the lamp for the anxious excursions to the verandah to read the cheap thermometer presented by the Reliance Lumber Company.

"I wish the Lumber Company had kept their thermometer. It makes you nervous every time the sun sets."

"When the wheat is in the milk, Mother, and the kernel is soft, the least chill in the air drives me to the porch. When it reaches forty degrees something begins to ooze out of me. Eight degrees more will mean another year's work gone."

His tone and face revealed the strain he was under.

"But there's next year, John," came the patient voice out of the semi-darkness from across the table.

"Yes, next year!" he broke out. "Last year we had hail. The year before was a dry year. Wasn't this year to be 'next year?' The West

always gets its bumper crop next year—and," he grudgingly conceded, "of course, in 1915. Now it looks like 'next year' is to be 'this year' once more."

"Don't you think it would help if we prayed, John? We used to pray—together, I mean. It was down East when the children were young."

There was something wistful in her voice.

"It seemed real down there, where we had a church. Somehow help seems so far away on the Frontier. Prayer never sent mercury up in any thermometer the Reliance Lumber Company gives us farmers free."

Everything, long days of toil and grubbing, careful selection of seed, good ploughing and discing—all seemed to depend on that thin column of mercury in the thermometer, now so relentlessly shrinking. McKellar shivered. He tried to walk up and down the little shack. He tried to smile, but the smile faded grimly away. He thought of saying that he didn't care, but he cared too much to permit his lips to frame such a ghastly lie. Once he stopped in his pacing to and fro to put his hand on his wife's shoulder, and the gentle face caressed the back of it with her cheek.

He could endure it no longer. He took the lamp again. When he returned, he didn't speak, she didn't ask. There was no need. She saw his face. He knew she knew.

How long they sat quiet, unspeaking, she did not know. Her lips moved, but it wasn't to her man she was speaking.

At length he broke forth: "I don't understand God out here. It isn't as though we were slaving

for ourselves. It is all for the boys. God seems to forget us folks in these new settlements. Why should it be better near the railroads? No, I don't understand God."

There was silence. She would utter a wise word or not speak at all. Then the quiet voice answered through the dusk of the room: "Perhaps not, but"—then a pause, as though even she scarcely dared to cherish so great a hope—"but He understands us. Maybe that is more important."

"Failures! that is what we are, and because of conditions no man can control—hail, drouth, and now frost."

"Pioneers, John, not failures. New countries are built on anxiety and suffering and hardships. When we get more bush cleared there will be a better chance to escape the frost."

"We are in the woods, Mother. God isn't trying to make men a success in these woods."

"No, and perhaps not anywhere. That isn't His work, to make successes. He is making sons. You and I ought to know how hard that work is, making boys into sons."

For they had known their sorrow, with the boy who had left home—their Angus:

She watched him as he sat with his face close to the lamp. Something glistened in his eye and ran out upon his cheek. He rose. As he passed her chair, going to the stairs, he paused and kissed her on the top of the head. He hadn't done this for months.

She lingered in her rocker, reading a chapter in that new translation of the New Testament that

her sister had sent her from Halifax. She missed the well-known words of The Hebrews. It bewildered her a little. There seemed to her something irreverent about one man daring to translate the whole Testament. But one phrase darted out to her and gripped her: "Our eyes fixed upon Jesus as the Pioneer."

The clock ticked out the minutes.

She thought of her man restless on his bed in the room above; of Angus—if she only knew where; of Jesus as "Pioneer"; of God as Better Parent than she and John knew how to be. She leaned her head upon her arms to pray.

Her lips could frame only one word: "Sons!"

CHAPTER II

THE NEW SCHOOL

It was bright and clear next morning, as you have never seen it if you haven't lived on the Prairies. At six o'clock the McKellars breakfasted—toast, tea, one egg apiece and some canned moose meat. Life did not seem so hopeless in the morning's radiant sunlight as it had the night before in the gloomy semi-darkness of the kerosene lamp.

"Will you go through the field, John, to see what happened?" she asked.

"When it goes as low as thirty, you don't need to go through the field, you simply know what's taken place," was McKellar's reply. "I am going across the creek to Bruno's garden. A garden shows more quickly than a field what damage has

been done. And I want to find out their mind about the school."

Jack Traxler was at the corral. No, the burning of the stack hadn't done any good. They had a reliable thermometer which they had bought from a Mail Order House in Winnipeg. It had registered only thirty-five.

They walked together along the trail to Bruno's and found him already in the garden computing his loss.

"The vines are turning black," was his greeting. "When the sun is higher we'll know better."

"There is only one crop that doesn't fail in this settlement, the human crop. There is no lack of youngsters. There's enough for a school now and we must have a meeting soon to organize."

"But I couldn't send mine to your school," interjected Bruno, quietly, but firmly.

"And why?" asked McKellar.

Bruno hesitated for an instant, then answered: "They are going to their grandfather's at Muenster. You know our people came from Stearns county, Minnesota, to form St. Peter's colony. I am named for the Abbot who spied out the land in 1903. He travelled by train from Winnipeg to Edmonton, then by waggon all the way to Saskatoon. Mr. Ens of Rosthern guided them by way of Fish Creek and the Hoodoo plains to Middle Lake and Lake Lenore, to the present site. Perhaps you have seen the Abbey and the College at Muenster. The idea of the founders was to plant a German Catholic colony with our own priests, our own churches, our own paper, our own language, and our own schools.

Perhaps it would have been better had I stayed in the colony near Humboldt. My father helped me to get a start here, but he made me promise to send the children back to him to Muenster for their schooling. When the children are young they should be taught religion, so our people don't believe in your godless public schools."

"But surely, Bruno, the school is a democratic institution, where all religions should be respected alike," interjected McKellar.

"In the first place," rejoined the German Catholic, "all religions ought not to be respected alike, for they are not all alike. I want my children to learn the true faith, the holy Catholic faith. In the second place, in your schools, all religions are not respected alike. They are all disregarded alike. It is nothing to me to call the school a democratic institution. I want it to be a religious institution. And our priest tells me that Christian piety is lacking from the regular work of these schools of yours. I remember his words: 'A sacred breath is needed to warm the souls of masters and pupils alike.' It takes religion to do that. Democracy can't do it. Our folks came to Canada first of all in the interests of their faith. I am no longer in the colony of St. Peter, but I shall be true to its ideals. So, though I am slashing poplars and grubbing stumps up north here, I still put religion before my farm and my children's faith before your democracy."

"How can we build a united Canada without a common school?" asked McKellar, thunderstruck at Bruno's point of view and the warmth with which he advocated it.

"How can we keep the Catholic Church *with* your school?" asked Bruno in turn. "I love Canada as well as you, but I am even more anxious to make our people religious than to make them united. I am sorry. I want to be neighbourly. But I must think of the eternal salvation of my children. So I am sending them to my father's to attend the Sisters' school at Muenster. There is no future to the West unless it is Christian, and, of course, I want to see it Catholic."

"Now what do you think of all that, Jack?" asked McKellar as they returned along the trail.

"He's partly right, but almost altogether wrong," was Traxler's reply. "Our people came to Canada within a year of the founding of St. Peter's colony. It was shortly after the Boer War. Times were bad in England. My father came with the Barr people to establish an "All-British colony." If I had remained in England father would have sent me to one of the big public schools, perhaps Winchester. Those schools have traditions. They are not democratic nor common. But they are British. They believe that the end of education is to teach duty and honour, to give character, to hand on traditions, and to keep us all British. Personally I think that all these traditions would be safer, if we were all members of the Church of England. I agree with you that we should have a united Canada. But, depend upon it, there is only one way—keep out the "dirty, ignorant, garlic-smelling foreigners." I am all with the bishop in his fight for British immigration. More important than anything else is to keep the West British."

"I thought we were Canadian," replied McKellar, "and out of this mixed people in this West we might in time make a greater stock than even the British, provided, of course, that the public school is given a chance and all contribute their best to the common store and stock."

"We don't want mixed people," rejoined Traxler with some heat. "We want British ideals, British connection, and British stock—pure, unalloyed, unmixed, unadulterated British."

"'Pure British!' Shades of Hengest and Horsa and William the Conqueror!" muttered McKellar to himself as he crossed the creek to go home. "I think he means 'pure Anglican.' I wonder where our school is coming in in all this. The frost this morning is worse than I thought."

CHAPTER III

LABOUR DAY

There is no more beautiful spot in all Northern Saskatchewan than the grove at Beaver Lodge. Here the road from the Saskatchewan turns abruptly before it reaches the bridge across the smaller river, the White Bear. Stately spruce trees stand in a natural retreat between the curve of the road and the bend of the river. Behind the grove is a cottage, whitewashed with red trimmings, standing on the edge of a plateau covered with brome grass. Nestling in the grove itself was an open-air pavilion built by the settlers for dancing and public meetings.

The sports advertised for Labour Day included baseball games, swimming contests and running

ances. In the evening, of course, there was to be dancing in the pavilion. An orator from Saskatoon was billed to deliver a lecture. Though he made four distinct attempts to gather an audience he never succeeded in overcoming the attractions of the refreshment booth or the ball-games. He was making a survey of the social problems of the North. A few hundred yards along the river a recent forest fire had laid bare an illicit still operated by a local Scot. This revelation of iniquity on the Frontier, duly entered in the itinerant orator's notebook, appeared to compensate him for his disappointment in failing to deliver his address.

One could easily see the clean sand at the bottom of the river, though the water itself had the appearance of fresh-brewed tea. The heat of the day made swimming a popular pastime till red-haired Tommy Jackson, suddenly getting into difficulties,—rumour had it, from eating too many ice cream cones—promptly sank like a piece of lead. His shining red-hair was his salvation. A visitor from Prince Albert jumped, fully-clothed, into the stream, grabbed his dank red locks, and handed him up to the frightened crowd. "He's full of water"; "Turn him over on the grass"; "Pick him up in the middle"; were the helpful suggestions of wise bystanders.

The excitement of the afternoon reached its climax in the horse-races. Peter Thunder-Cloud, a full-blooded Indian, was there with his cayuses, having ridden over with his two sons from Chagoneess. He sat with them watching the games, his long hair plaited in two braids down his back.

Peter's knowledge of English was deficient, but adequate to enable him to inform the Saskatoon lecturer that no missionary had ever been allowed on their reserve. Asked about God Peter simply grunted, pointing to the ground, "This my God." He was pure pagan. He was anxious to beat the Hungarian Joe Toth in the race, for Joe's wife had gathered senega root on his favourite hunting ground. Now as a horseman Joe Toth was likely to prove a worthy competitor. Joe had lived at Mezohegyes, beyond Budapest, where Old Austria had maintained its government stud-farms. He knew horses, loved them, and could ride them. Other competitors scarcely counted. It was generally conceded that the race lay between Joe Toth and Peter Thunder-Cloud.

The Indian's horse was greyish brindle; the Hungarian's was black, with a star on the forehead, and with its two front feet white to the knees. The Indian rode with a blanket; the Hungarian with a light saddle. The Hungarian sat with the grace of a trained horseman or a Greek god; the Indian with the ease of a rider of the plains or a Centaur, crouching slightly and seeming to melt into unity with his cayuse.

"They're off!" went up the shout. Six horses were in the race, but only two mattered. Joe and Peter quickly drew ahead. The dry summer had made the ground hard, and the sharp foot-fall of the racing horses seemed like heart-beats to the eager spectators. Neck and neck, on they came. The Hungarian had a short whip. The Indian swung a rope and chirruped and sang to his horse.

When they were only seventy-five yards from the goal, suddenly a child broke from the crowd and ran out across the course. A cry of fear arose. The Indian, child of the prairies, keener in ear, heard. He was slightly leading. How he did it, no one knew, whether by magic of the knees or tightening of the reins. Suddenly swerving to the right to avoid the child he crashed into Toth's black horse. Before it can be written horses and riders were piled in a heap. Eager spectators ran to help. Peter Thunder-Cloud was frightfully gashed about the head. "Me, all right. Kid all right, too?" he asked. Joe Toth's horse had broken a leg and Joe himself lay white and still, unconscious. A Ford truck rushed him to the Church Hospital at Wauchope.

"An emergency case," cried the Junior Sister to the Matron, Janet Croll. "A Hungarian hurt in the race at Beaver Lodge."

"I'll be there at once," replied Janet.

She paused a moment. If one could have heard the words which her heart did not permit her lips to utter aloud, he would have been surprised to hear a prayer: "God help me to forgive!"

Janet Croll had been a Nursing Sister in the Great War, who had seen service in the Mediterranean. The hospital ship on which she served was torpedoed by Admiral Horthy of the Hungarian navy. She had been set adrift in a small boat. Even now she was drawing a pension from the Imperial Government for impaired health caused by that terrible experience.

"A Hungarian! God help me to forgive, to

give him a chance of life," she muttered. Had she come to Canada, to Wauchope, to be Matron of the Hospital only, to meet Hungarians again? Their very name frightened and unnerved her.

She went with steady step to the operating room and helped with cool brain and steady hand. The Nurse and the Christian in Janet Croll triumphed. She would avenge herself on Horthy and his crew by deeds of kindness and mercy done on Joe Toth. Wauchope's little hospital would wipe out the memory of the Mediterranean and destroy the ghosts of the Great War.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these Hungarians,"—such was the new motto for Janet Croll.

CHAPTER IV

WINTER

Snow fell about the middle of October. The winter was bound to prove difficult for the settlers. Fuel itself, however, was no great problem. Poplar was plentiful, so plentiful, in fact, that the land was hard to clear. But the quality of the wood was so poor and the distance to haul it to market so great that its sale was not at all profitable. The crops had been meagre and damaged by frost. The dry weather had made the potatoes scarce. Two unmarried Englishmen and a Welshman, come from the Old Land on the miners' harvester excursion, were cursing their luck for not being able to draw doles for unemployment at home. They sensed that they were none too welcome in a frontier settle-

ment that could scarcely feed itself. Mennonites from Russia, persecuted to the point of martyrdom by Bolsheviks, were warmly greeted by their brethren and offered hospitality and fellowship in the prayers that were constantly ascending for the deliverance of sufferers left behind. They were massive folk with simple, loving hearts. John McKellar and Fred Traxler secured work with the Prince Albert Transportation Company, teaming supplies by way of Montreal Lake to Stanley Mission and bringing back sleigh-loads of fish. Each trip took a month. The big C.P.R. bridge at Nipowin furnished navvy work for not a few.

The meagre crop and the early snow-prevented the Hungarian Dionys Kozma, from building his house and forced him to spend still another winter in the hut he had set into a dug-out in a hillside of his homestead. It was not an adequate dwelling, but Kozma, nevertheless, opened wide its door to receive John Nemeth, a fellow-countryman, when he stumbled to his home sick with pneumonia. Nemeth had arrived from Hungary late in September accompanied by two older brothers. They secured farm work in the neighbourhood of White-wood, but their hearts were set on obtaining homesteads. John, being the brightest and most resourceful, though the youngest, was sent north to make the selection for all three. A heavy blanket of snow which fell on his arrival in the settlement prevented him from seeing the land to judge the soil. He decided to wait till the May winds should drive away the snow and call the flowers forth. He knew flowers and by the flowers he found he

would judge the soil. So he waited, getting a job on the bridge. He had not reckoned on the severity of the Canadian winter. His home-spun clothing from Hungary was ill-suited to the rigours of the Saskatchewan climate. He fell ill. He was afraid to go to the Municipal Hospital, partly because he had no money, partly because he feared lest, being sick and penniless, he might be deported to Hungary. So in his extremity he turned for friendly shelter to the hill-slope dug-out of his compatriot, Dionys Kozma. He died of pneumonia in the pale moonlight as Kozma was away hunting help. So Nemeth's dream of a better country ended, at least, so far as Canada was concerned. His brothers came from Whitewood and performed the last tender offices for their youngest brother, dressing him in the home-spun his old mother in Hungary had made for him. Out of rough poplar boards they made a coffin, placing boughs of evergreen for him to rest upon. Mrs. George Zatopek donated a soft pillow. A clean home-made hemp sheet served as coverlet for the coffin. Word reached the brothers that Rev. Fred Hoffner, the Hungarian missionary of The United Church, was preaching on Sunday in a neighbouring lumber camp. They sent a messenger to fetch him after the communion service. Hoffner found the coffin resting on an improvised stand in front of the dug-out. Roman Catholics though the brothers were, they gladly accepted the services of The United Church missionary, for sympathy means much spoken in the mother tongue. He conducted the funeral service in the open air with the thermometer standing at thirty-five degrees.

below zero. There was no room in the dug-out. So the frosty air rang out the Magyar equivalent of the hymn dear to all Calvinists in the Hungarian homeland:

"I heard the voice of Jesus say
Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon my breast."

As the service concluded the sun sank to rest on the brim of the horizon, spreading its golden and purple royal robe upon the grave and the dug-out. The moon was rising with its silvery rays. In the instant when the missionary spoke the words of the Committal the brilliant, changing drapery of the Northern Lights sent forth its shafts of glorious radiance. Near the coffin the Nemeth brothers had placed their candles as good faithful Catholics. It was a symbol of their hope, frail and flickering, but faithful and loving.

As Hoffner was speaking a word of sympathy to the brothers a compatriot saluted him: "Are you not the editor of *Az Otthon*, our Hungarian paper?"

"Yes, my friend. Why do you ask?"

"Joe Toth in the hospital at Wauchope has been reading it. He met with a serious accident on Labour Day and is recovering slowly. He would like to have you visit him."

So in the bitter cold Hoffner travelled on horseback to the hospital at Wauchope.

He was admitted by Janet Croll, the Scottish Matron.

"I am the Hungarian missionary," he introduced himself.

"Hungarian!" she exclaimed. "Like Horthy?"

"Yes, madam, he is now Hungary's regent. He was one of our greatest admirals in the War."

"Admiral!" she broke forth. "Assassin, you mean."

There was something in her eye that told him not to pursue the topic, so he simply replied: "I should like to see Joe Toth. You can depend upon it, I won't assassinate Joe."

Joe gave the missionary a warm welcome. They soon discovered that they came from the same town in the great plains of Hungary. Joe remembered his father telling how the boys at school had with a rope pulled Hoffner in a basket to the top of a high watch tower. Hoffner only too vividly recalled the incident. For months he had not been able to lift his eyes to that tower.

"What kind of Matron have you here, Joe?" at length queried the missionary.

"Splendid!" was the enthusiastic response. "But I hope you did not discuss Horthy."

"I simply remarked that he was an excellent admiral."

"Never do that," warned Toth. "He torpedoed her hospital ship in the Mediterranean during the War. I pity him if he ever comes to this hospital as a casualty."

As he was on the point of leaving Hoffner caught sight of the matron in the hall.

"I want to apologize, Matron," he began.

"You have nothing to apologize for, sir," she smiled.

"Oh yes, I have—for Horthy! I am sure he would never have torpedoed you, if he had seen you. It must have been due to low visibility. I apologize for him."

"Your punishment is to stay for tea," the Matron laughed back.

CHAPTER V

THE APOLOGY

Wauchope Hospital is a church hospital. It was placed to serve a frontier community, mixed in race and religion and remote from railways. It stands on a narrow wooded neck of land projecting out into Crooked Lake. The doctor in charge was father to the countryside for forty miles in all directions.

"And I'm the mother of the settlement," declared Janet Croll as they sat at tea. "Two hundred babies I've helped into the world since I came here after the War, and all new Canadians."

She was a sweet-faced woman of the middle thirties with a pleasing Scottish accent and a merry twinkle in her eye, except when Horthy was praised. Hoffner's hearty laugh soon established them on a friendly footing. He was somewhat older, well-proportioned and muscular, and of a strength possessed by few men of any race. He seemed willing, even eager, to consume quantities of her tea and shortbread.

At length he cried, "Enough! Now I am pre-

pared to do penance for Horthy and all Hungarians and to render homage and return thanks for such noble tea and this cake divine."

"Your punishment is already decreed," answered Janet. "Tell me, how did you ever get here from Hungary?"

"It is a long story," he replied, "but it will seem to me a fleeting tale in the telling if I can have so fair a listener and prove that Hungarians are able to endure—as well as to torpedo," he added with a grin.

"This is not my first visit to Canada," he began. "Before the War I visited this country as a Professor of Agricultural Statistics for the Hungarian Government. I even addressed the Montreal Canadian Club. But I spent most of my time studying Hungarian settlements in Saskatchewan."

"I was happy in my work at the College. But my wife died, and I had to send my son, very young, to relatives in the United States. Then war came. I was still of military age. Naturally I was called to the colours. I was sent to the Eastern Front, against the Russians. Within two weeks, early in September, 1914, I was severely wounded in the head and taken as a war-prisoner. The Russians carried me far into the interior. Life was tolerable, though monotonous, till the Czarist regime was overthrown. When the Bolsheviki gained power trouble began. They were for compelling us, as prisoners of war, to take up arms. I declined: I advised my fellow-prisoners to stand on their rights according to international law. For my pains I was sentenced to be shot. But the night before I was to meet my

fate the sentry on guard before my hut got drunk. With my fingers I dug my way out through the floor and under the wall and escaped to the woods. And, you see, I am still at large. I travelled ever eastward, eastward, eastward. I had learned the language and was fed by peasants. After weeks of journeying I caught up with a caravan of Turkish camel-drivers carrying goods across Siberia. Fortunately they were willing to engage me. I soon picked up Turkish, too. So, as a Turkish camel-driver and a Mahommedan, I kept in their company for months. At length we came to the confines of China. There God brought me—I have no other explanation for it—to Mr. Gale, a Y.M.C.A. Secretary from Princeton University. With his help I reached Vladivostock and was accepted as an interpreter by the British Expeditionary Force that was forwarding ammunition into Manchuria. The officers also employed me as physical director. In some way the Bolsheviks there learned about me. I became a man marked again for death. When the Royal Hants were returning home to England by way of Vancouver, I was asked to help to carry the officers' baggage on board the transport, the *Monteagle*. An English officer, whose confidence I had won, detained me till the *Monteagle* was in motion. Everything I owned in the world, including a Testament given me by Mr. Gale that had won me back to a faith in God, was left behind in Vladivostock. At Vancouver I was smuggled off the ship as a stoker. I was back in Canada again.

My first thought was to join my son in the States.

But when I attempted to do this I was detained at the border and interned as an alien enemy. In my distress I remembered friends I had made in Yorkton before the War. I wired them. They secured my release through the Minister of Immigration at Ottawa. I was once more free, but without employment. In the rain I walked the streets of Vancouver. Finally I secured a job as a "bull-cook" in a lumber camp. The food there restored my impaired strength. Later I came on to Winnipeg. Then the Presbyterian Church in Canada—it was before the Union, you know—greatly venturing, appointed me in charge of a Hungarian mission at Otthon. The principal of the Theological College at Saskatoon learned of me and persuaded me to become a candidate for the ministry. I had been a full-fledged professor for years but I entered the classes as a student. I took a complete course in theology and was ordained. Now I am a missionary to the Hungarians of northern Saskatchewan and preach at fifteen points over a large area and, besides, edit a monthly paper, the *Az Otthon*. I am now applying for naturalization.

"From an academic point of view my career has been ruined. But I am happy to serve the Church in promoting the spiritual welfare of my fellow Magyars."

"Did you know Horthy is a Calvinist, like you Scots?" Hoffner asked abruptly, his mind reverting to the Hungarian Regent.

"A Calvinist?" exclaimed the amazed matron.

"Yes, like John Knox," replied Hoffner proudly.

"Well, then," laughed Jarret Croll, "it was pre-

destined that Horthy should torpedo our ship. That seems to diminish his guilt."

"Yes," quickly rejoined Hoffner, "and predestined that you should escape and come to Wauchope, and," he added with a smile, "perhaps it was predestined from all eternity that I should come to Wauchope, too."

"To see Joe Toth?" was her query.

"No, to apologize for Horthy and to sip this noble tea," replied the missionary. "I am a Calvinist, too, and I feel that it is predestined that before very long I shall again return to Wauchope."

CHAPTER VI

THE MOTHER OF THE PRODIGAL

Hoffner had lingered over his tea longer than he had planned. The night was desperately cold for riding, with the wind cutting the face like a razor-blade. He rode on till his cheeks lost all feeling. The trails were heavy. He could not hope to reach his destination before midnight. He resolved to apply for shelter at the next shack. Suddenly a light revealed its location. So Hoffner came to John McKellar's home at Beaver Lodge.

He rapped. Mrs. McKellar came to the door, holding her lamp high. Hoffner explained that he was a missionary overtaken by the storm.

"Come away in; your face is frosted," she invited.

Hoffner explained that he must first find shelter for his horse. So she sent the eldest boy with him to put the horse in the double stall with the cow.

"And perhaps you can find an oatsheaf for the missionary's horse."

It did not take long to thaw out the face and to get circulation restored, though for some time the cheeks continued to sting sharply. Mrs. McKellar quickly brewed some tea and fried a fresh moose-steak.

"I have just been visiting Joe Toth at the Wauchope Hospital. His home is here at Beaver Lodge, I think," said Hoffner.

"Yes, and it was our youngest boy, Donald, that caused the accident, running across in front of the horses. He might have been killed, but God was good to us.

"Joe has been under heavy expense at the Hospital," she added. "We feel responsible, but pioneers have no money, not even for hospitals."

"But, Mrs. McKellar, this hospital was placed there by the Church to help pioneers. It gets assistance from the outside, or it would have been bankrupt long ago. Support comes from the whole Dominion. All Canada is behind the Frontier, and the whole Church is behind every part of its work."

"Church!" she exclaimed. "It makes me think of morning and evening bells and singing and the minister preaching about the hills of Galilee. It makes me think of home and down East and my mother. I haven't seen a church nor heard an organ for five years. Do you think perhaps we could have fortnightly service next summer and the Lord's Supper at least once."

She paused, a wistful look on her patient face.

Hoffner inquired about the community. It was

a mixed settlement. There were three United Church families, two of them Presbyterian and one Methodist, a Baptist family, an old Nazarene couple, two Anglican families. The rest were non-Anglo-Saxon—Hungarians, both Roman Catholic and Reformed, Mennonites, Doukhobors, Scandinavian Lutherans and Ukrainians, both Uniats and Orthodox. Little financial support could be expected, and no one Church could afford to support a missionary.

"The Church has many demands made upon it; I myself preach in fifteen places covering half the province. And our Hungarians contribute but very little," was Hoffner's solemn reminder.

"There is one verse, however, that I have looked to as a promise," she rejoined, as though she would not be gainsaid. "You will find it in 'Matthew 11: 5: 'The poor have the gospel preached to them.' We are heartsick on the Frontier for the Gospel. We had hoped to get a radio to tune in to church services, but the crops failed us."

Hoffner promised to place the situation before the Presbytery and the Superintendent.

She made him a shakedown for the night on the kitchen lounge.

Before she retired she said earnestly to him: "We have four boys. Three are with me upstairs. Their father is teaming in the far North, to help see us through the winter. He'll be at Montréal Lake to-night. My oldest boy—we don't know where he is. When you say your prayers will you ask God to keep all safe who are away from home?"

In the morning the missionary held what he

called a "family worship." He prayed for absent dear ones. The night before, on the trail, there had run through his mind a line of what he named his "Mercy-Seat Hymn:" "From every stormy wind that blows." As they knelt in the little kitchen of that shack of the northland, he recalled the mother's words;

"Though sundered far, by faith they meet
Around one common mercy-seat."

She told him about her oldest boy, their Angus. He was not a bad boy. But he had found the clearing of the land intolerably irksome. Slashing and grubbing stumps wore down his spirit. He could work with a will only where he had interest. He liked social life but there was little at Beaver Lodge. He liked singing but there was no church. He liked working with machinery, but pioneers must work with their hands. And, above all, he could not abide grubbing stumps. The father was a patient plodder. He could not understand the high-spirited lad. Matters reached a crisis when Angus became interested in Elsa Thorvaldsen, the daughter of an Icelandic neighbour. She had gone off to the Normal School and was now teaching somewhere. In two more months Angus could have completed his homestead duties and proved up his quarter-section. The father, anxious to prepare more land for oats, had reproved him for not being willing to work longer hours. He had said: "You think more of that white-haired Icelandic girl than of getting your homestead. You will never make a farmer." Angus had hotly replied: "I don't want

to be a farmer, and I don't care if I never prove up the old homestead." "You can't make a living at anything else," was the father's rash taunt. Stung by his father's heedless speech, that night Angus had gone off, leaving a note:

"I won't be back till I can make a living for myself, and it won't be on the homestead. And it may be for the white-haired Icelandic girl. Good-bye. Angus."

He had not written since, she said.

"He's too proud," added Mrs. McKellar. "He's not old enough to know that that kind of pride crushes mothers' hearts. 'Tis not an easy task, sir, to be a parent."

Hoffner expressed his sympathy, promising to report any trace of the lad he might find. On leaving he thanked her for her hospitality. But she in turn expressed gratitude to him.

"It has helped to talk to a missionary," she said.

She went on: "I need my church. I want my son." She added, for she was very loyal to John McKellar—

"I miss my man. He's eating his heart out mourning for the lad, too. And it's cold, very cold, teaming up there at Montreal Lake."

CHAPTER VII

THE HOME-MAKERS

John McKellar had been able to get his school in spite of Bruno's hostility and Jack Traxler's indifference. In the end Traxler had yielded, for he was a practical soul, and even Bruno had helped

by hauling a load of lumber from town for the "godless school." Volunteer work by settlers had considerably reduced the cost.

As there was no suitable place for a teacher to board it was decided not to open school till Spring. Then, the trustees resolved, they would build a small teachersage.

During the winter, before the seats arrived, the school-house served as social centre for Beaver Lodge.

The first meeting was to organize a Home-Makers' Club. Mrs. Jack Traxler had written to Miss DeLacy of the University. She promised to come in the middle of January. She had asked for a covered cutter to fetch her from the nearest railway station and she had sent suggestions for making the meeting a success. One suggestion was "to assemble an exhibition of women's work." This occasioned wonder and merriment among some of the women.

"I'll give an exhibition of washing pans," declared vivacious little Mrs. Boyd.

"I'll show her how to wash the baby in the family dishpan," said another.

But the non-Anglo-Saxon women heard the announcement with solemn satisfaction. "Yes, me show somet'ing like in Old Countree," said a sweet-voiced Ukrainian house-wife.

It was decided to make a Field Day of the occasion. In the afternoon would be an exhibition of women's work; at six o'clock would be supper; at eight a concert; at ten, a dance. Miss DeLacey would address the women in the afternoon. For

the evening programme they would ask the local Member of Parliament, Charles McIntyre, and some one to represent the non-Anglo-Saxon portion of the settlement. Hoffner's name was immediately suggested. And all invited had agreed to come. Hoffner would arrive a day or two earlier as he had "one or two patients to visit in the Wauchope Hospital."

The exhibition opened at two o'clock. The English-speaking women confined their attention mostly to cooking. But what cakes! What pies! What preserves! Little Mrs. Boyd who had promised to give a display of washing pans had brought a collection of ten different kinds of preserved native fruits, all found on their own homestead.

"I have a lot more wild strawberries, Saskatoons, wild cherries, wild raspberries. But I was almost ashamed to bring these. But what else can you do in a country that doesn't grow apples, plums and pears?"

Knitted sweaters and mittens there were aplenty.

The Ukrainian, Hungarian and Scandinavian women came wearing their old-country headdress and native costumes. And a vivid picture of many colours they made. For the first time in a Canadian community they seemed not to feel at a disadvantage with their Canadian sisters, and these Canadian sisters were most generous in their praise. For these European women had brought wall-hangings, hand bags of quaint old patterns, throws and tops for foot stools and benches, coverlets for beds, table cloths of hemp beautifully em-

broidered with blue thread, cushion covers and coarser fabrics, a worthy exhibition of arts and crafts that could scarcely be duplicated in a great city. And the women, dressed in their peasant's costumes, explained to their Canadian neighbours, with musical voices that compensated for the faltering English, how it had all been done. They told of carding the wool, spinning it into yarn, and the hours spent weaving it into patterns.

"And we thought you were a coarse folk when we saw you working in the fields with your husbands. You've got more beauty in your souls than I ever imagined existed," bravely declared an envious little English bride.

A Norwegian woman had brought her loom and the women crowded around to watch her deft fingers fly among the threads.

Mitzi Swystun told Mrs. Boyd how she dyed her wool. She found the pretty shades among the ~~common~~ weeds and trees of the North, and all of them, except some pussy willows, on their own homestead.

"It is lots of fun. I ~~don't know~~ all their names in English, but I try, try and try for their pretty colours," said Mitzi.

She had with her a tuft of soft green wool dyed from the birch leaves in the Spring, a deeper green from the leaves in the Summer, and still deeper from the leaves in the Autumn. She had beautiful shades made from chickweed, horsetail, sumac, juniper and reindeer moss. Pussy willow had made brilliant gold.

"It goes with other colours to make soft, beautiful shades," said Mitzi.

She explained the method of making the dyes: "You must first wash the wool, then boil it in alum water. The leaves, bark of trees, weeds or plants from which the dye is made are also boiled in water. Then you strain it. Then you place the wool in this sap with alum to—how you call it?—to 'set' the colour. Then you put it in the sunshine to try how fast the dye is. There's lots of colours all about us in vegetables, trees, weeds, flowers—and in the sky. But you can't boil the sky," she laughed.

Mitzi was a Ukrainian and her gift was the love and knowledge of colours. The Hungarians, Mennonites and Doukhobors exhibited exquisite needlework. Two or three pieces of petit-point won fine praise, as did lace work of the finest quality and home-made linen.

"And I thought they knew only sheep-skins," said Mrs. Boyd. "If that bishop of ours calls them 'dirty, ignorant, garlic-smelling foreigners' again I'll join the Uniats," she broke forth.

At the supper the English-speaking women came into their own.

"You make nice t'ings," said the plump wife of an independent Doukhobor. "Your t'ings that you cook are dainty like you, not big, fat, like me," she declared with a chuckle, munching her cake. "I guess we make too much soup," she sighed.

The evening programme was largely musical. The Doukhobors and Mennonites made no con-

tribution to the entertainment except to join in the community singing with a will and a volume that attracted attention and won generous applause. The Scottish songs reached every heart irrespective of race. A broken-down Hungarian cavalry officer drew from the piano melody that would have been a miracle even if the instrument had been well-tuned. A Ukrainian violin selection was loudly encored. The voices of an English quartette blended perfectly. Miss DeLacy warmly commended the exhibition of women's work. Charles McIntyre, M.P.P., expressed his satisfaction at the very evident unity of the settlement and spoke of the need of sympathy and mutual understanding in building up frontier settlements. Hoffner gave an address, full of pathos, comedy and picturesque language, on "My Escape from Siberia to this Land of Promise." He concluded: "I have now been around the world in peace and war. Canada is for many of us the Land of Promise. We shall all, from whatever land, be grateful for it and loyal to it. We shall all bring our best to it. Music and love and work are universal bonds. You see how they unite us here to-night. Never before had I heard the Scottish songs as sung this evening. But they bring me peace and happiness, and satisfy my heart."

As Hoffner said these words Mrs. McKellar glanced at the Scottish Matron who had driven over with the missionary all the way from the Wauchope Hospital. Janet Croll suddenly flushed. Mrs. McKellar murmured to herself: "I wonder!"

Before the regular dancing began there were

folk dances with singing of folk songs: Scandinavian, Hungarian, Ukrainian, German. A Czechoslovak immigrant illustrated the gymnastic exercises of the Bohemian Sokols. A Dane, who had taught school at Aarhus, gave an exhibition of swinging Swedish clubs.

Then came the country dance, popular in every frontier settlement. The school was small but the floor was good and the music lively. The Mennonites and Doukhobors did not remain. Dancing was too frivolous a pastime for their sombre mood. It was the younger folk of all nationalities who entered into the swing of it, and whirled and twirled to their heart's content.

The day had been perfect and had cemented the settlement as nothing before in the history of the community. At midnight coffee and sandwiches were served. Shortly after, Mike Biro grew hilarious and Joe Novokshonoff made disparaging remarks about all Germans. Finally Pete Kovacs threw a piece of pie, hitting the violinist in the eye.

"A bull's eye!" some one shouted with more truthfulness than tact.

Only the wisdom of cooler heads prevented a fight. The trustees asked the orchestra to play "God save the King."

Mrs. McKellar was not satisfied. Her husband away, she herself went next morning to the Traxlers to learn why the programme had so suddenly degenerated and so abruptly concluded. Jack Traxler furnished the explanation.

"It was that bootlegger, Scotty McLean. He brought hard stuff from the Liquor Store at Nipowin

and mixed it with his own squirrel booze. If Scotty hadn't run out of his supply or the dance hadn't been broken off by the trustees, they'd all have been climbing trees before daybreak."

As Mrs. McKellar crossed the creek back to her shack, she muttered, "Squirrel booze!" Then her heart, if not her lips, framed the prayer: "Lord, send us a missionary. Lord, don't forget the Frontier. Lord, keep Angus safe from squirrel booze."

CHAPTER VIII

PRESBYTERY MEETING

The February meeting of Presbytery was held in Wesley Church, Prince Albert. Dr. Archibald was in the chair, and Rev. Henry Morrison was Secretary. A devotional period of fine spiritual intensity opened the morning session. The Fathers and Brethren were alert to transact the King's business. Ministers from the eastern part of the presbytery had been forced to travel by the early morning train. Rev. Mr. Ball was feeling a glow of righteous satisfaction at having caught the train at Tisdale without mishap. His satisfaction was on the point of passing over into the peace of a quiet snooze. A travelling Secretary, discussing the theme of evangelism with splendid fervour, launched into the subject of good literature and warned against the pernicious effects of reading *Elmer Gantry*. Ball heard the word "literature," and he was awake at once. It was like a call to battle. Something in the denunciation of the eloquent Secretary irritated the normally peaceable presbyter.

He could restrain himself no longer. Rising to the full length of his elongated form he broke in upon the speaker:

"Mr. Chairman, I should like to ask the Doctor, if he has read *Elmer Gantry*?"

"Read it!" the Secretary exploded, "of course, I haven't read it! I wouldn't read it! And I hope you haven't read it."

"Yes, I have read it. It isn't much of a book. But it is better than your criticism of it," replied the exasperated Ball.

"Hum! Hum! Well! Well!" ejaculated the flustered Secretary, dropping the subject and running for cover. "As I was remarking, what the world needs is a revival of pure religion."

Rev. Walter Macdonald, Convener of Home Missions, presented the claims of his committee. The whole North was opening up, perhaps as far as Rottenstone Lake, 250 miles to the north. Let them remember that Prince Albert was sixty miles south of the centre of the province. The C.P.R. was projecting four lines of railway from their city. Prince Albert would then be united with the mines and fisheries of the North, with the farming communities of the South, with Hudson's Bay at Churchill, and with a new through line to the Peace River. The C.N.R. was expecting to lay miles of trackage at Hudson Bay Junction to store Prairie wheat for feeding into the line to Churchill.

"The trend is northward," he declared. "The Church must keep pace. An era of phenomenal expansion is at hand. This means more people and still more people and larger areas and more

fields to cultivate with the spiritual message of the Church. Immigration is pushing on ahead of the railways. The railways are pushing on ahead of our mission outposts. We need the vision of Robertson, the courage of Woodsworth, and the spirit of Jesus."

At this juncture the Superintendent, Dr. James Nicholson, interrupted:

"Hoffner, our Hungarian missionary, brings a request for a missionary at Beaver Lodge, a frontier settlement in the North. He says the people there need the Church, and at least some of them want the Church badly."

"What can they themselves give, Doctor?" asked the practical but not unsympathetic Convener.

"They were frozen out last year, Mr. Convener. They can't give much. But they have souls, you know—and children."

"Yes, I know. What is the community like?"

"Very mixed, a few Scottish Presbyterians, a Hungarian Calvinist or two, a handful of Anglicans, some Lutherans, a couple of Uniats, a scattering of others, and, of course, Roman Catholics."

"Are the Catholics serving their own people there?"

"No; no better than we."

"I suppose, Mr. Chairman," resumed the Convener, "that in Saskatchewan there are a couple of hundred settlements of this type, that have nothing like adequate Church ministrations. The people are divided as to denomination. On the Frontier, naturally, they are still poor. But the McKellars

of Beaver Lodge are so eager for services that I move that Presbytery open Beaver Lodge as a new field and send in a missionary for the summer."

"Carried!" came the unanimous verdict.

The next committee to report was the Missionary and Maintenance Committee. The Rev. N. D. Cott, Associate Secretary, was present to speak in its behalf. Last year the people's givings in The United Church had fallen short more than half a million dollars. It was imperative to increase contributions or to restrict the work. With deficits new fields could not be opened up.

"But you are not reckoning with Prince Albert Presbytery, Doctor," interrupted Dr. Archibald, the Chairman. "We have just opened up one at Beaver Lodge."

"It takes more than a resolution of Presbytery to open up a new field," returned the Associate Secretary. "It takes more than the needs of a community or the request of settlers. It takes the sacrificial giving of a whole Church. The Church must learn that it can't conquer the Frontier for Christ by doling out chicken-feed to God. You've got to give the finest of the wheat."

So it came about that Beaver Lodge got no missionary that year, because good Christian people on the prairies and down East in comfortable pews did not feel the constraint of Macedonia nor hear the call of the Frontier. They did not realize.

"And two chocolate bars per week per member from the whole Church would have taken possession of the whole land for Christ," beanoaned the Superintendent.

Mrs. McKellar and Beaver Lodge had to wait. The poor were not yet to have the Gospel preached unto them.

CHAPTER IX

FOUND!

During the previous autumn Hoffner had been requested by the heads of Hungarian families at one of his Elder appointments, who were looking for cheap land to give their boys a chance, to locate suitable quarter-sections still open for filing. This he had succeeded in doing in the new homestead area north of Rabbit Lake, towards the Beaver and Waterhen rivers. Naturally he felt a measure of responsibility for them. So in the early summer he paid them a visit. His coming greatly heartened them. He assisted in organizing a school district, consecrated a cemetery for their dead, and arranged for church services every second month.

On his return he remained over at St. Wallbridge to deliver his lecture on "Bolshevism." Rev. Mr. Leonard, a former classmate, was minister. An enthusiastic worker among young people, he was well suited to this pastorate. After the lecture the minister invited the choir to the manse for a social evening. Songs followed.

"Gus, sing for us 'D'ye ken John Peel?'" called out John Turner.

Only after much pressure did Gus comply. His full-throated, rollicking song charmed them all.

"Mr. Hoffner," said the minister, "have you met Gus McKellar? He's come recently to substitute at the Wheat Pool elevator."

"Gus McKellar!" exclaimed the Hungarian missionary. "You are not Angus McKellar, are you, from Beaver Lodge?"

"That's my home," admitted Gus.

"I'll walk home to the hotel with you," said Hoffner quietly.

As they strolled through the little town Hoffner spoke:

"Angus, your mother will be a happier woman now for knowing where you are. You and I shall both write her in the morning. Where have you been?"

The story was not long.

"I was sick of grubbing stumps. There was nothing but the crow-bar all day long. It was monotonous, tiresome, tedious and everlasting. My father could put up with it. If he had even hated it with me, I might have been able to stay on with him. But he never complained. I didn't want to grow content with that life. There was no hope of anything better at Beaver Lodge. A girl there that I liked left for Normal. It was too dull to stay. Then something father said stung my pride—and I just left.

"It wasn't easy, I can tell you, and it isn't easy yet. I reached Saskatoon with only five dollars. For three nights I slept in the park. I ate only bananas. I got a job with a contractor paving the streets. I wheeled cement. When I got a cheap suit of clothes I went to church, mostly to hear the music. As soon as I had courage enough I asked to join a choir. The choir-leader took me on at once. In the winter I became janitor of an office building.

I went to night-school and learned bookkeeping. One of the boys there with a job at the University sorting wheat went back to Scotland and recommended me for his position. The work was tedious but I learned to grade wheat thoroughly. So when they advertised here for some one with a knowledge of wheat-grading and elementary bookkeeping I applied. Here I am, substituting at the local elevator of the Wheat Pool.

"I wouldn't write home till I had made good. I haven't a steady job even yet. But I am making a start. And the Wheat Pool is bound to have a future."

"But you will write to her now, won't you?" pleaded Hoffner, as they parted for the night. "She would like it. Mothers are that way, you know."

"Yes, to-morrow. But I won't mention Elsa."

"And Elsa—who is she?"

"Oh, the white-haired Icelandic girl from Beaver Lodge."

"Where is she?" asked the missionary.

"In the non-Anglo-Saxon community at Elm Lake, about ten miles from here, teaching school. I knew she was near St. Wallbridge when I applied for the job. She lives in a teacherage over there."

Hoffner took the train next morning. Gus was on the platform to see him off.

"I wrote home early this morning. The letter is on the same train as yourself," said Gus, and the morning light shone on a happy face.

CHAPTER X

HEART'S EASE

As Hoffner journeyed to North Battleford he thought of the joy the tidings of Angus would bring to a woman's heart at Beaver Lodge. The sight of Jack Fish Lake reminded him of Crooked Lake. Yes, of course, there were Hungarians near Wauchope whom he should visit. It would be better not to write at all, but to go in person to see Mrs. McKellar and those Hungarians.

On a fine afternoon towards the end of May, Hoffner saddled Firefly to ride to McKellar's shack. His horse was a noble beast, prancing still in spite of a stiff canter across the prairies. The missionary felt the rhythm of the swift motion of his horse as he sped down the hill that sloped to McKellar's house.

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!" he murmured.

It was a shock to find no one at home. A climb to the top of the stable revealed no person at work in the field or in the scrub.

He crossed the creek to Bruno's place and called out a salute in German. Bruno explained that McKellar was at the back end of his quarter, trying to fire a slashing and finish some grubbing.

"And Mrs. McKellar?" queried the missionary.

"They've taken her to Wauchope Hospital. They were afraid of a nervous breakdown. She has worried over Gus. They haven't heard from him for nearly a year. It is a stiff business being

a parent, I can tell you, especially when boys are getting to be men. Then, when news came that there would be no church again this year, and no missionary, she seemed to break down. This hope had buoyed her up. Anyhow she needed a change, and that Scottish Matron at Wauchope persuaded John McKellar to let her go there for a fortnight as her guest. Herr missionary! that is a wise woman, that Scottish Matron, *nicht wahr?*”

“Ja wohl!” replied Hoffner. “A wise woman.”

The Hungarian missionary did not linger to discuss crop prospects nor the miseries of grubbing poplar stumps although Bruno would have welcomed conversation. Mrs. McKellar’s removal to Wauchope had given him a fine pastoral justification for his visit. His mettlesome steed, Firefly, was soon cutting down the intervening miles. Never did the journey seem so long, never in reality was it so quickly accomplished.

There is something about the prairies in the Spring that subdues our hearts to peace and yet fills them with hope. The delicate foliage of the trees in the bluffs, the springy ground beneath your feet, the peeping of the crops from the tilled fields, the balmy breezes never absent from the plains, the sloughs glistening in the sunlight after their months’ imprisonment beneath the ice, the meadow-larks, the wealth of crocus and wild roses, and the return of the birds and gophers and wild life to the fields—it means life and hope, and to Hoffner it meant love.

The Matron was busy, but the Junior Nurse conducted the missionary to Mrs. McKellar. She was

sitting on the upper verandah, her Bible in her lap, looking across the tree tops to the lake and beyond to the rolling hills. Hoffner was struck with the way the winter had put its mark upon her. She was thinner, even quieter than before. There was something ethereal about her face. "Still, she smiled and greeted him cordially.

"You are surprised to find me here?" she asked.

"Not surprised, but glad; Bruno told me you were here on a visit with Miss Croll."

"She's giving me a wonderful rest. She is so restful herself, and so kind."

"You've been reading?" inquired the missionary.

"Yes, Luke 15, about the things that get lost, you know. I got to understand it in the War, when my brother was 'missing.' If I had been translating the New Testament I should have spoken not of the Lost Son but of the Missing Son. I read this chapter every day. It is my favourite. I am sure some of it is true. I am hoping all of it will be true for me, too."

"And have you a favourite verse?" asked Hoffner.

"Verse four," she answered promptly. "I'll read it: 'Which man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness'—a good description of Beaver Lodge, isn't it?—and go after that which is lost until he find it.' Is it your favourite, too?"

"No," answered the missionary. "Reach me the Book. Here it is, verse 24: 'For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is

found.' I like it better as you would have it translated: 'He was missing and is found.'"

"Not Angus?" she broke forth, looking at him quickly.

"Yes, Angus!" Hoffner replied, holding out his hand. "He is well and he is writing you. I have come to tell you that he greatly loves you all."

Her eyes filled. Her lips moved quietly—in thanks to God, Hoffner thought. She placed her finger on verse 24; and said only: "Missing;—Found."

Hoffner told her the story of Angus' venture into the world. He concluded:

"And I found him singing in the choir of a church."

"A church! Thank God! I'll have fresh faith now to pray for a church, or at least services for Beaver Lodge."

He knew she wanted to be alone with her new-found joy, so left her to go in search of Janet Croll. But he was fated to be disappointed. It had been a heavy day for her, the Junior Nurse told him, with two new babies born into the world and now a major operation under way in the Operating Room. He would not be able to see her, for she was going straight to bed. To-morrow would be her afternoon off. She was going to learn to ride one of the Hospital's horses.

"Hoffner presents his compliments and offers equestrian tuition," was the message the missionary left for her.

He could not restrain the impulse to at least walk past the Operating Room. Keeping vigil at the door

he recognized a middle-aged Ukrainian woman from the settlement. He knew her language, too, but, better still, he knew the universal language of sympathy, and pausing beside her he said gently:

"What ails thee, little mother?"

"My girl—she sick, very sick," pointing to the Operating Room.

He listened to her story. It was a ruptured appendix. The doctor himself was anxious.

"~~It is~~ hard to be a mother—in Canada," concluded the mother, relieved through being able to pour out her tale to a sympathetic listener. "It is not like Old Country. In Canada they t'ink father and mother 'old fogey.' They get new clothes, new thoughts. They like not old ways and old tongue. Father and mother too old to learn English very good. Boy and girl won't talk Ukrainian. It makes big distance between. No good. Girl need mother. Mother need girl, too, to talk to and to love. It is same way with all immigrant folk. They have sore hearts when children grow up. Of course, we glad children become good Canadians. But when they sick or in trouble, old woman, she is little girl's mother again. So I'm much sorry and much glad. I'm like mother again with little baby."

Hoffner spent the night with Frank Nagy. The morning he devoted to writing editorials for his Magyar paper, *As Otthon*.

At two o'clock he was at the hospital with Firefly. He was delighted to see faithful Mark Sedgeworth lead the doctor's horse to the hospital door.

Janet Croll came down and cordially greeted the missionary;

"Well, I'm ready for equestrian tuition. Is the tutor ready?"

They rode slowly, for riding was a new experience for the Matron. Then they tried a little canter. Once Janet nearly fell, but Hoffner was observant. He quickly caught her by the arm and placed her securely in the saddle.

"I like riding," she said at length.

"Together, like this?" he asked.

"Well, it's safer, at any rate for me," she laughed.

"It's pleasanter," he retorted,—"at any rate for me."

They rode around the point of land that juts out into Crooked Lake and saw the cormorants gathering on the little island.

"I'd like to see a cormorant's nest," she said as they drew up their horses at the point.

"I'll row you over in that boat there. I wonder whose it is."

"Oh, it's only Mark's; he'd let us have it," she replied.

So they rowed across, examined the little island and were returning when Hoffner said:

"Not afraid?"

"Of what?" she asked.

"Hungarians! You know Horthy might launch a torpedo here," he teased her.

"Oh, I have accepted his apology, you know. And you've been so kind to Mrs. McKellar and, well, to everybody, that you don't seem like I thought the

Hungarians, at any rate old Horthy and his crew, were like."

"Maybe I have changed, too. You know I was naturalized last month by Judge Dickson. I'm a Canadian now. In fact I'm more Canadian than you are. You are Scottish yet."

As they were riding back to the Hospital she asked what he had had to do to become a Canadian.

"Live here for five years," he replied, "behave myself and undertake to be loyal. It gave me a little tug at the end—to renounce Horthy. But we are building up a new country here. I think I have found a place in helping my compatriots into Canadian life and into the Kingdom."

"Would I have to wait five years to become a Canadian, too," she asked, "and go before a Judge?"

"No," he replied, "you don't have to wait five minutes; you just have to go before a Minister—with a Canadian."

They were riding through some shrub. A veil she was wearing caught in a branch. He sprang quickly to her assistance. It is not on record how he extricated her, but it seemed to take a longer time than such rescues usually require. In any case, before the veil was set to rights again, Janet Croll had promised to become a Canadian "in spite of my Scottish accent."

They rode quietly back to the Hospital with a radiant joy on their faces.

As they entered the gate she laughed:

"Torpedoed again by a Hungarian!"

"But safely brought to port—by a Canadian!" retorted Hoffner.

And when Mrs. McKellar heard of it she was glad:

"God bless you, my children!"

That night when Mrs. McKellar read Luke 15 she noticed verse 32: "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad."

CHAPTER XI

SOCIAL INFLUENCES

The opening of the school was delayed because of the teacherage. The trustees did not feel justified in going to great expense, so enlisted community effort in a Bee. The women provided dinner and supper in the school house. The men worked with a will on the teacherage. They were astonished at the excellence of Doukhobor soup. Dinner was furnished by the non-Anglo-Saxon women; supper by the English-speaking women. Billy Boyd expressed the general judgment: "The dinner strengthened us to work; the supper rewarded us for our labour."

A moment of tension arose as the men sat around after dinner. The election was drawing near. The Fiery Cross had been burned at Prince Albert. Woodrow, who had spent the winter in Moose Jaw, began to set forth the virtues of the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan would achieve many things, but, above all, it would keep the schools free from all religious emblems. Unfortunately Bruno overheard the eloquent Woodrow. He sprang to the defence of his faith. Sentiment in Beaver Lodge was sharply divided. Little talk was needed to break up the

Bee or to divide the settlement into warring camps. John McKellar interposed in the interests of peace.

"The Klan!" he shouted. "I'll tell you about the Klan—the Clan McGregor. Did you not know I was descended from the chief of a Clan. If I had my rights I'd be the leader of a Clan to-day. And if I were, I'd order the whole bunch of you at once out of this school-house to start nailing on the siding of yon teacherage. The women want us out of this so that they can wash the dishes. And mind you," he added, comically shaking his finger at Woodrow and Bruno and raising a general laugh, "no politics till we get this teacherage built!"

The new teacher, Isobel Davis, arrived on Saturday. The women furnished the teacherage, meagrely, it is true, but neatly. Each gift meant the sacrifice of something that the humble homes could ill afford to spare.

It soon became evident that the children had found a new friend. This was her first school. But she was a graduate of the Provincial University and of the Normal School and she had attended the Leaders' Camp at Lumsden Beach. She had brought with her to Beaver Lodge a football and other sport equipment. She understood boys' games. She encouraged the girls to play, too. She watched their play and sometimes herself took part.

Mrs. McKellar had the teacher at supper early in the week.

"Would they let me start a Sunday School?" asked Isobel.

"Let you! I for one would bless you."

Mrs. McKellar's visit to Wauchope had followed shortly after. On her return she found that the energetic Isobel Davis had been doing revolutionary things. She had divided the children into four groups: the girls into "Golden Keys" and "Canadian Girls In Training"; the boys into "Trail Rangers" and "Tuxis Boys.". Some parents were alarmed.

"How are we ever going to buy all the tooth-brushes she demands?" exclaimed little Mrs. Boyd.

"She even tells them what to eat and how often to wash," said another.

But the children enjoyed the meeting of their groups immensely. One group met each afternoon when school closed.

Mrs. McKellar returned from Wauchope much refreshed, and eager to help the Sunday School.

"Hoffner says he can get us lessons and papers," she told Isobel.

When the Sunday School began each group became a class. And each class wanted Isobel as teacher. Not to offend any she became superintendent of all. This made it necessary to enlist four teachers, no easy task. Mrs. McKellar volunteered to try the Tuxis Boys.

"I don't know theology, but I do know boys," she confided in Isobel. "After I know Angus has been kept safe, I must do all I can for other boys. We may not have services but we must not let the Church's work down at Beaver Lodge."

So the work of the Kingdom was carried on on the Frontier in a Sunday School maintained by a

little consecrated school teacher and some mothers who cared.

"And it's just fun!" laughed Isobel. "I'm shining up their teeth and brightening their spirits."

"And saving their souls," added Mrs. McKellar.

Rain fell during the last week of May and periodically throughout June. There was not a large acreage in the settlement, for the land had all been redeemed from stumps. But the crops grew luxuriantly and hopes were high.

Representatives of the Wheat Pool called a meeting of the settlers at the school house to consider signing up for a period of years.

"Not many acres are involved," they said, "but if we gain each new Frontier the Wheat Pool will always win out."

The branch line was already approaching Beaver Lodge. Before long there would be an elevator. Traxler would have nothing to do with the Pool:

"I can trust to my own judgment and initiative. I shall not sign away my freedom."

The greater part of the community felt it to be an advantage to have a system of orderly marketing:

"We only want just prices, average prices. Each for all, and all for each. It will prevent dumping wheat in the early fall after threshing."

The Pool meeting was well attended. What surprised many was the nature of the plea put forward—the need of building up a united community feeling, the enhancement of the dignity of the agricultural industry. "The first industry to be learned,

ours is the last to be organized," said a speaker from Ladstock. The Pool was not designed to make prices hard for the consumer, but to eliminate the middle-man. Some day they might have in Britain an Imperial Marketing Board, which would mean orderly buying. With orderly buying in the Old Land and orderly selling in Canada, all would benefit, except the parasites:

"It is a distinct advantage to the pioneer settlement. It puts the remote farmer on the same footing with the large grain-grower close to the railroad. It places the European newcomer on an economic level with other Canadians in the matter of marketing. They will be no longer handicapped by their lack of English in understanding quotations. The Pool is a community bond, a national bond, an Imperial bond, and it exists for service."

McKellar, Traxler and Bruno discussed the matter on their way home along the creek. Even Traxler was converted. They all decided to sign up.

Frank Cox of the Prince Albert Electric Shop was vastly interested in the little teacher at Beaver Lodge. When she came to the Teachers' Convention he reproved her for living alone in the teacherage "in a country like that." It was plainly his duty to visit her some week-end.

"Oh, I've got my Organized Groups and Sunday School," she laughed back at him.

"Groups, indeed!" he protested; "I want to visit you alone."

"It isn't done in a teacherage," was her warning.

Undaunted he replied, "When may I come?"

The Beaver Lodge teacher was ready: "You may come if you are willing to have me name the conditions and fix the date."

"I'll submit to any conditions, but the date must be soon," said the eager clerk of the Electric Shop.

So it was agreed that he might come on a Saturday early in November and stay with the Boyds till Monday morning.

"And the two conditions?" he inquired.

"Attend my Sunday School and bring a radio with a loud speaker."

So on a Sunday afternoon in November the whole settlement was at the schoolhouse. Few there had heard a radio. There was much speculation as to whether the poles were high enough and set in the right position. Was it suited for other languages than English?

The Superintendent had each Group assist in the Sunday School programme. She herself spoke on Luke 2: 52, explaining the ideals of Religious Education. Then she introduced Frank Cox. All eyes were on him as he turned the dials. The radio whistled, shrieked, spluttered. It happened to be the day that The United Church broadcast from Moose Jaw a service of good will and understanding. Suddenly a voice was speaking. Boyd could make nothing of it. Traxler looked astonished. Frank Cox himself was amazed. Yet to all there there was something familiar about the voice.

"It is an angel speaking Magyar," Mrs. Kovacs cried out excitedly.

"Well then, it is a male angel," retorted McKellar.

"It is Hoffner, Hoffner," called out Dionys Kozma. "He is wishing us all to be good neighbours, good Canadians, good Christians—and he's wishing us good night."

Then followed a regular church service from Winnipeg. The speaker was Dr. Robert Cockburn, recently appointed Secretary of the Home Mission Board. His subject was "Unconscious Influence." He preached from Acts 5: 15: "That at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them." He prayed for the settlers on the distant Frontiers who were without church services.

"I'll write that man, for he is talking to God about us pioneers of the Northland," Mrs. McKellar resolved to herself.

"I knew him when he was a kid at Brantford," said Mrs. Green finally. "His voice hasn't changed a bit. I bet he's still jumping around like a cricket."

Baskets had been brought for a Sandwich Tea. Then the radio evening was resumed. An eloquent divine from Saskatoon was belabouring The United Church for its tyranny.

"He sounds cross," said Billy Boyd.

The Pentecostals, the International Bible Students, the Hexagonal Gospel from Calgary, each had their half hour. Monsignor Knox of Dallas, Texas, in simple language carefully explained the claims of the Roman Catholic Church and gave reasons for venerating the Virgin Mary, while all the while Bruno nodded assent. The Consolidated Oil Com-

pany got the air, Sunday though it was, to advertise its products. Then a Chicago station broadcast "An old-fashioned Sunday Evening," concluding with the hymn:

"Abide with me! fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide:
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me."

At a nod from the teacher, Frank Cox switched off the radio. She said:

"We shall dismiss as we do in school by all rising and repeating together the Lord's Prayer."

All rose, old and young, Catholic and Protestant, and with bowed heads, led by the little school teacher, repeated "Our Father."

Beaver Lodge had had its first church service—by radio!

Outside the moon shone brightly as the settlers scattered to their homes. Even Bruno thought the school was not altogether godless.

CHAPTER XII

NEWCOMERS

In November Angus McKellar wrote Hoffner. A new settlement of Hungarians had sprung up at Mistanim, near Elsa's school, and the destitution was appalling. Some had found work at the lumber mill. But there was bound to be suffering when immigrants had arrived in the district from the Old Land with only twenty-five cents to face the winter with. Would Hoffner come?

"Well," remarked the missionary, "I have fifteen points scattered over half a province already. One or two more won't matter. When will The United Church ever give me a Hungarian helper?"

So early in December Hoffner was scouting again. On Sunday he held a Communion service. He addressed five denominations in three different languages. On Monday he explored the new settlement and ascertained the needs. On his return to Saskatoon he poured forth his story to Mrs. Henry, wife of his old college Professor. Was the Church not the custodian of the tender heart of Jesus? Must social service for the Frontier be left to the spasmodic and uninformed charity of a newspaper Christmas fund? Little ones on the Frontier, in weather twenty-five degrees below zero, were running barefooted on floors made of hewn poplars. It was a rural slum that he had to deal with. The immigrant children needed coats, sweaters, underwear, shoes, stockings, everything. The Missionary and Maintenance Fund of the Church made no provision for such emergencies. Clothing need not be new, it need not be whole, but it must be secured quickly.

The Henry family became a Committee of Relief for Mistanim. Mrs. Henry telephoned the neighbours. Mrs. Bowden gave a warm dress, coat, shoes, and an almost complete outfit for a girl of fourteen. Mrs. Buchan rummaged through her house and sent a parcel. Others ransacked their wardrobes and closets.

"It's lucky," said Mrs. Henry, "that old clothes

will help, for with our big family of boys it's the only kind we've got ourselves."

Potato bags were obtained to pack the supplies. The Professor, who was reading examination papers, was bundled out of his study that it might be used for an assembling and packing room. All the boys of the family had to have a hand in the important enterprise, and contributed of their toys as well as of their garments. Suddenly young Kenneth, five years of age, who was undressing for bed, exclaimed:

"Where are my pyjamas?"

"In the potato bags for Mistanim," declared George.

Loud lamentations from Kenneth revealed the conviction on his part that for little fellows, at least, there ought to be some limit for mothers to give away clothes. Finally the pyjamas were salvaged. In due time Kenneth was clothed and in a right frame of mind. Mother and the children were unanimous that father should pay all express charges involved in the shipment.

"You haven't given much," they complained. "Your clothes are too poor to send even to Mistanim."

Two weeks later a letter came from Bernat Hovey of Mistanim. The shipment had been a wonderful help. The clothes had been shared among fifteen immigrant families.

"Might have been sixteen, if they had got Kenneth's pyjamās," observed the practical John.

As soon as possible Hoffner returned to Mistanim. On his way he saw Angus McKellar at St. Wallbridge. Angus showed him a letter.

Beaver Lodge, December 20th.

"Dear Angus:—

I cannot say how glad I was to get your letter. Even to see my name on the envelope and to know there is a message from you gives me more joy than you can think.

My heart was full of pity for the new immigrants at Mistanim. All new settlements suffer. It must be worse when the immigrants come so far, from Europe.

The crop at Beaver Lodge was better this year though the fields are still small.

Your father and I talked the matter over with Kozma and Bruno, and we decided to canvass Beaver Lodge district for some help. It isn't much we could do for we are still pioneers ourselves. But we are sending you a bale of clothing. Besides I got \$17.65 in cash, for which you will find a postal note enclosed. New settlements must help newer ones. And we must do it before we get indifferent like the old ones. Only Frontier people understand the pioneers and their difficulties.

I wanted to do this as a kind of thanksgiving to God. He is very good to us, and to you.

I always pray for you. I believe in prayer and I believe in Angus, too."

Your loving mother,

AGNES McKELLAR."

"It's a great help, that," said the missionary.

"For Mistanim, you mean?" asked Angus.

"Yes, but I meant, to have a mother like that," replied Hoffner.

At Mistanim one of the first to greet the missionary was Joe Gsendes. A veterinary surgeon in Hungary, he had become a bar-tender; then a gardener in Canada. Near Middle Lake the previous summer he had made six hundred dollars from the sale of cucumbers, but had spent it all at the Government Liquor Store at St. Bruin. He had now attached himself to this new settlement. At the Sunday evening service there were in attendance Norwegians, Polish, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Germans, and a few English. Angus sat near the front of the store in which the service was held, and by his side was a white-haired girl. It could only be Elsa. The frankness and sweetness and seriousness of her face won the missionary. Hoffner opened the service with a German invocation. Hymns were sung with a right good will, in both English and Hungarian. He preached in English on Hebrews 11: 16: "But now they desire a better country." A congregation was organized with curator, secretary, treasurer, and four elders. It was named "Arpađ."

The missionary drove to the teacherage with Angus and Elsa. They were very quiet.

"We should like to be married," at length they told Hoffner.

"As soon as you get the license I am ready," he replied.

They explained the situation. Angus' position had good prospects. Next summer he hoped for an elevator. In the meantime he was receiving little more than would maintain himself. Angus would not have his wife teaching school after they were married.

"It is that Scottish pride and independence of his," said Elsa.

"I must support my wife myself," declared Angus.

Everything depended on next summer's crop.

"Send for me at any time," said Hoffner.

Elsa made them a cup of tea in the teacherage. She had made her little house very attractive and homelike. Hoffner would have a good report of her to carry back to Beaver Lodge.

"I'll tie the knot tight enough," laughed the missionary as Angus and he left for St. Wallbridge.

But Elsa seemed troubled.

CHAPTER XIII

BUT WHAT TO THOSE WHO FIND? AH, THIS!

Mrs. McKellar had Isobel as eager ally in her efforts to secure a minister for Beaver Lodge. Inspired by the radio sermon, she wrote Dr. Cockburn, now Home Mission Secretary. Isobel had the children secure signatures from parents for a petition to Presbytery. And she remembered that her father's friend, Rev. Russell Mair, would have to seek a change of pastorate with more life in the open air.

At its spring meeting Presbytery, encouraged by the larger missionary givings of the previous year, urged by Convener and Superintendent, decided to ask the Settlement Committee to appoint Rev.

Russell Mair to the frontier field of Beaver Lodge. At the same time it invited Professor Henry during the coming summer to visit the Home Missions within its bounds.

Great was the rejoicing at Beaver Lodge. But the joy soon gave way to consternation. No one had thought of a manse. Whenever they met groups discussed the weighty problem, where could the minister live? McKellar finally offered a practical suggestion. Four miles south was a vacant homestead. Let the minister file on this. All could assist in erecting a house and help clear enough land for a garden. So it was arranged.

It was a notable service, the first in all that northland held by an ordained minister. The little school-house at Beaver Lodge was packed. The Psalm announced brought tears to the eyes of some who joined in the service of praise:

"I joyed when to the house of God
Go up, they said to me.
Jerusalem, within thy gates
Our feet shall standing be."

Rev. Russell Mair was an earnest speaker. A small man, as he proceeded, his moral power had the curious effect upon the congregation of making him appear a large man. For his theme, "Foundation-Sacrifices," he chose as text, 1 Kings 16: 34: "In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho; he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub." Mair declared:

"Only that into which you build your life will ever live. Hiel built Jericho 'a place of fragrance' by building his sons into its fabric. God Himself has no other way. He is building a Temple of Life out of Humanity. Into it He has built Jesus Christ himself, His Son, as chief corner-stone. So we, too, are all building Canada and building God's Kingdom. Not the least important is the building that we pioneers are doing in these frontier settlements. I desire to say two things. We must build our children into Canada's life and the Church by leading them early to Christ and teaching them to love this noble land and God's House. Secondly, we must regard our fellowmen in this Dominion as 'no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens and brothers.'"

In the middle of the summer Janet Croll resigned as Matron. It was arranged that Hoffner should come to Wauchope in August for the wedding, that Mair should perform the ceremony, and that Professor Henry, now on his visit to the mission fields, should be driven over for the occasion by the McKellars. Dr. Scott gave the bride away, and the Junior Nurse played the wedding march. The groom's gift to the bride was a brooch shaped as an anchor: "to prevent nautical disasters," he explained. They had originally planned an extended trip, but both were glad to be finished with travelling.

"It is ever the best journey that takes one home," declared Hoffner.

So to Saskatoon, to "Monteagle," their pretty new home, they motored.

Professor Henry returned with the Mairs to Beaver Lodge. They had arranged for two addresses on Friday, three services on Sunday, and a lecture on Monday, "The Making of the Prairies."

"And Russell," teased Mrs. Mair, "you said you'd make the Doctor help build the calf corral."

So all that Saturday morning the Frontier missionary and the theological Professor toiled, hauling and shaping poplar poles, to build a corral. To save digging post-holes the corral was placed to include three trees. Wire was used to reinforce the corners and to close yawning gaps between poles. They were weary enough before the fencing was finished. Finally the missionary brought the calf from the stable, and in triumph impounded him in the new corral.

"I'll feel safer now about leaving the place. I'll not have to chase all through the bluffs for him."

"Dinner!" called the missionary's wife.

As they entered the manse Mair bade his wife note the solidity, compactness, neatness, effectiveness of the morning's work.

"As carefully constructed as Calvin's Institutes," he added, out of deference to the Professor's cooperation.

But Mair had not reckoned with the perverseness of that calf. As if to overwhelm the theologians with confusion, in that very instant the calf felt a

longing for the great open spaces. Inserting its head between a strand of wire and a poplar pole, it impudently, but nevertheless successfully, lunged through. The morning's work had ceased to be a glory and a pride. The calf was at large.

"I hope, Russ," said Mrs. Mair, "that Calvin's Institutes were more solid than your corral for calves."

"Oh, they were only for theological students," laughed the missionary.

That evening they sat watching the red glory of the setting sun shine through the bluffs of North Saskatchewan.

"I hope this experiment of coming to the Frontier will rebuild your health as you hope," the Professor remarked to Mair.

"It wasn't primarily for his health that we came," declared the mistress of the manse.

"For yours?" the Professor asked.

"No, for the family's sake," said Mair.

"I hope you don't mean that calf," broke forth Professor Henry.

"No," replied the missionary. "It has been our great grief that we have had no children. Once we did get to the point of adopting a girl. But we were anxious to have her known as ours. It was hard to achieve this in a prairie congregation. If we adopt her up here we can emerge from the Frontier without the whole prairie knowing she is not ours. You see, in this way the world would be none the wiser, and we should be much the happier. Could you help us, Professor?"

They both looked at him with an intensity that revealed the hunger of their hearts.

"A girl!" ejaculated the theological Professor with a helpless feeling. "We've got five boys. I don't know anything about girls. But never mind. All such tasks I hand over to my wife. She never fails. If there's one to be got, she'll get you one; no! she'll get you the best."

On Monday the Professor left to visit mission fields in the Big River district. The missionary's wife waved good-bye.

"Remember!" she called. "A girl!"

"The best!" he shouted back.

CHAPTER XIV

UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

On his return to Saskatoon with his bride Hoffner found a telegram awaiting him.

"Meet Elsa, C.N.R. train, noon Wednesday. Important."

(Sgd.) 'ANGUS.'"

What could the Hungarian missionary now do? The wire was nearly a week old. For all his efforts Hoffner could find no trace of her. He knew not where to begin. He called Angus by long-distance telephone and explained. The only reply was:

"I'll come at once."

Hoffner met him at the station and took him to "Monteagle." There the poor lad poured out his trouble to the sympathetic couple.

"Elsa is in trouble. We should have married when you were at Mistanim. She was coming to a hospital."

But they could not trace her. The ground seemed to have swallowed her up. Hoffner moaned:

"How often I've wished that our Church had a Home in Saskatchewan to which girls in trouble would instinctively turn?"

A week later Professor Henry returned to Saskatoon. He told his wife of the strange commission the Mairs had entrusted to them. Mrs. Henry promptly promised to assist.

"I never went hunting for a baby girl before," she exclaimed. "I'll get Mrs. Bowden to drive me."

They found two baby girls in the W.C.T.U. Home: "Augusta," a light-haired, blue-eyed baby; "Grace," a dear little dark-haired girlie.

Within two days of his return Professor Henry wrote to Beaver Lodge, inviting the Mairs to come to Saskatoon:

"One baby girl is sure; perhaps two."

During the Saskatoon Exhibition week Mrs. Henry received a long-distance call from Mrs. Mair from Nipowin:

"I shall arrive to-night. A friend is motoring me in two hundred miles."

At once excitement broke out in the Henry household. A general levy on the neighbourhood was planned to fit out the new baby going forth on this great venture. The Professor demanded ten dollars of his bachelor colleague.

"Professors without babies ought to be taxed," he declared.

Mrs. Henry resorted to the telephone. A complete layette was soon provided for the baby that was going out to brighten the Frontier.

That afternoon the Professor met Hoffner:

"Mrs. Mair is arriving to-night, for that baby girl we promised to get her. She will probably have a choice between 'Augusta' and 'Grace.' What a name 'Augusta' is! It sounds like one of the Roman emperors. But the Matron said that the mother named the baby after a less imperial personage, Gus, the child's father."

"Gus!" excitedly exclaimed Hoffner. "Where is that child and its mother?"

"In the W.C.T.U. Home," answered the professor.

So it came about that early in the afternoon Gus and Hoffner found Elsa and little Augusta, and moved them to "Monteagle." So it came about also that next day when Mrs. Henry took Mrs. Mair to the Home only "Grace" was available.

"But it is Grace that I want anyhow," said Mrs. Mair as she took the wee girl to her arms and heart.

"I was wrong in thinking Augusta was open to adoption," said the matron.

Next day a wire reached the Hoffner home for Angus McKellar:

"Wheat Pool offers you permanent position at regular salary in charge of local elevator on new branch line in north of Province at new town of Beaver Lodge. Wire immediate reply."

"Any reply?" asked the messenger, handing Angus a telegraph form.

And Angus wrote:

"Wheat Pool, Regina,

Accept position at Beaver Lodge. Available immediately. (Sgd.) Angus McKellar."

That afternoon Angus and Elsa were quietly married at Monteaagle.

"I shall need another witness beside Mrs. Hoffner. Who shall it be?" asked the missionary.

"Mrs. Mair," replied Angus. "Her coming helped us find Elsa."

Mrs. Mair's journey homeward with little Grace was like a progress. To pack the baby's clothes the professor had to part with an old valise he had travelled Europe with. He secured for them a seat in the parlor car—"In honour of the baby of the Frontier." He arranged for the Chairman of the Presbytery to give them hospitality at Prince Albert.

"Nothing is too good for pioneers—and mothers," he insisted.

The Rev. Russell Mair was waiting with a car at Tisdale—"to meet my daughter."

Mrs. McKellar was early at the manse on Saturday.

"It is the first baby in a manse north of the river," she declared in excuse for her early appearance. "I couldn't wait."

"But I was just coming to see you, Mrs. McKellar."

"To see me?" said the astonished visitor.

"Yes, I have great news for you. Angus and Elsa are married. They have a baby girl, Augusta. And Angus has the job in charge of the new Wheat Pool elevator on the new town site here at Beaver Lodge. He said to tell you that, now that he can support himself and his wife, he's coming home. And he sent his love and said that he's bringing the 'white-haired girl' along—only there are two white-haired girls now."

"Married! Why didn't he tell us about the wedding at the time?"

"He waited till he got a permanent job," explained Mrs. Mair, more loyal to Angus than to historical chronology.

"Well, he's got a permanent job now. But it is the best job in the world, building up homes and families on the Frontier," returned the happy mother.

"And I've got the best baby in the world—Grace. It seems like the grace of God," beamed Mrs. Mair.

CHAPTER XV

MOVES THE CHURCH OF GOD

Angus returned to Beaver Lodge with Elsa and "Gusta" on the first accommodation train that came over the new branch line. The little house at the elevator was not yet ready. So, crowded as the McKellar's shack already was, Mrs. McKellar insisted that Angus bring his family home.

"There's always room for one's children," said the radiant mother.

"And grand-children," added John McKellar, no less pleased and proud than his wife.

"And the 'white-haired girl,' too," said the loyal Angus.

"White-haired girls," corrected Elsa.

Thanksgiving was approaching. The Hoffners were invited to Wauchope for the holiday. As soon as the Mairs learned this they decided that Sunday would be a high day at Beaver Lodge—Communion and Baptism.

The whole community was packed in the school-house. Never before had the Lord's Supper been celebrated in the settlement. It brought back tender memories of Ontario, Nova Scotia, the Mother Country, Hungary, Norway, the Ukraine—and thoughts of the Upper Room. Hoffner and Mair shared the service. Isobel Davis led the singing. It was never to be forgotten. The Hungarian missionary read from the Bible that had been given him by Mr. Gale, left behind at Vladivostock, forwarded to Budapest, and now was his ever inseparable companion.

Then came the Baptism.

Hoffner, standing at Isobel's desk that served for pulpit, invited the parents who desired to present their children for baptism to come forward.

There were two couples: the minister and his wife with little Grace, and Angus and Elsa with little Gusta.

The Hungarian missionary baptized each in turn, pronouncing a blessing over each:

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee!"

Then turning to the congregation, Hoffner said:

"These children are now publicly received into the congregation of Christ's flock."

Isobel Davis sang:

"When mothers of Salem
Their children brought to Jesus."

Hoffner concluded his prayer with the petition:

"Do Thou, O God, raise up the children to praise and serve Thee in their generation, that true religion may never perish from the land."

The Church was now established on the Frontier.

And Agnes McKellar was glad.

And Mrs. Mair thanked God.

And the Missionary and Maintenance Committee reported: "A new field has been opened in Prince Albert Presbytery at Beaver Lodge."

And the total average additional cost to each member of The United Church of Canada throughout the entire Dominion for the whole of that first year was one-fifth of one cent.

THE END